

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) The Ministry of External Affairs is conscious of the need to economise and all expenditure at Headquarters and Missions/Posts abroad is subject to check by Audit Authorities. The Ministry reviews, on a regular basis, the manpower requirements of Headquarters and of Missions/Posts abroad keeping in view the dynamics of foreign policy objectives in different parts of the globe. Eleven Missions have been closed down in the course of the last decade with a view to cutting down on expenditure. 175 posts in different grades have been abolished in Missions/Posts abroad and at the Headquarters of the Ministry during the course of the last one year.

The Ministry has also been actively pursuing a policy of purchase/construction of properties abroad with a view to curtailing expenditure on hiring of residential accommodation. The Ministry has also taken various steps, in line with Ministry of Finance guidelines, to economise expenditure, viz. a 10% cut in the non-plan/non-salary expenditure, 25% reduction in rates of DA for local tours by officers abroad and a complete ban on purchase of new vehicles.

Problems of Indians living in Nepal

2031. SHRI P. PRABHAKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news item captioned "Indians in Nepal homeward bound" appearing in the "Statesman" dated 5th July 2001;

(b) if so, Government's reaction thereto; and

(c) the steps proposed to address the problems of the Indians settled in Nepal as highlighted in the news item?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH): (a) to (c) Yes Sir. Government has seen the report which appeared in the Statesman of July 5, 2001. There have been reports of some families temporarily shifting their establishments from the Kathmandu valley to safer places in the aftermath of the tragic incident on June 1, 2001

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in which King Birendra, Queen Aishwarya and some other members of the Royal family of Nepal were killed. However, there are no confirmed and verified reports or information indicating that Indian families have been leaving Nepal immediately after the tragic incident on June 1, 2001.

The Government of India is following the developments in Nepal closely and is taking all steps as are necessary to safeguard the interests of Indian nationals in Nepal.

Approval for issuing Visas

2032. SHRI K. RAMA MOHANA RAO: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that more than three lakh foreigners had applied for visas to visit India to avail themselves of medical aid;

(b) whether it is also a fact that his Ministry is not giving its approval for issuing visas to them; and

(c) if so, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH): (a) A number of foreigners apply every year for visa for medical treatment in India.

(b) and (c) No Sir. Visas are issued to them in normal course by the concerned Mission/Post subject to usual checks.

Indians leaving Nepal

2033. SHRI ABANI ROY: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that hundreds of Indian families living in Nepal for decades are leaving for India immediately after the massacre of Royal family;

(b) if so, the facts and details thereof;

(c) whether Government have taken up the matter with the Nepalese Government; and

(d) if so, their reaction thereto?